

Fairhaven Fire Chief Correia “Services will need to be cut if proper funding is not obtained”

“The Fairhaven Fire Department handles over 4000 emergency calls annually. Each year our calls are increasing anywhere between 3-5%.

Our citizen demographic includes an aging population mainly housed in residences, but they are also located in three nursing homes, one assisted living complex, eight large elderly/low-income complexes. In addition, our Town has one urgent care center, one cancer center, and one dialysis center. All these equate to a very busy department.

Since 2017 we have stated the need to increase personnel to handle the increase in call volume. We also noted that we did not have enough reserves on shift, which caused an increase in overtime expenditures. We have publicly stated (at Finance Committee and Selectboard meetings) numerous times that our ideal shift staffing level would be nine (9) firefighters/paramedics. This staffing level would be needed to handle the current call volume and prepare for future demands.

The Town Administrator and the Selectboard have shifted funding around to support the addition of four (4) new firefighters. This is a necessary first step in providing a safe and adequate fire and EMS response. This funding allows us to cross-staff two ambulances with two firefighters and leave at least two/three firefighters back to handle additional EMS or fire calls. In addition, we will maintain a call department that supplements our personnel on scene to

ensure the safety of our personnel and the public.

Unfortunately, this department has had to request additional funding for the past few years during the fiscal year. We do our best to stay within the budget each year, but with inflation and increased call volume, additional funding is needed to maintain services.

We will continue to offer you the best service possible with the allocated budget, but there will be a time when services will need to be cut if proper and consistent funding is not obtained. Without the override, the municipality will be working with a deficit that will affect this department and our ability to offer consistent services.

As your Fire Chief, and also a taxpayer, I support the override request. This will be the best way to allow the department to grow with the needs of the people.

If you have any questions regarding our current staffing, please email me at tcorreia@fairhaven-ma.gov."-Fairhaven Fire-EMS.